

AMERICAN MUSLIM SHARES VIEWS ON LIFE IN UNITED STATES

**By Mark Betka
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WASHINGTON, APRIL 2 – American Muslims seek the same opportunities and face the same challenges all Americans do as they pursue their hopes and aspirations of achieving the “American Dream,” says Tina Kareema Dauod.

Dauod, a graduate student and State Department “citizen ambassador,” discussed her experiences as a Muslim American and her work to build bridges between Americans and Muslims worldwide in a March 30 webchat marking the close of Women’s History Month.

Dauod is a student of Arabic linguistics at Georgetown University in Washington. She also works for the U.S. Department of State on public diplomacy initiatives involving the Middle East and outreach programs to Muslims around the globe. Dauod is a first-generation American of German and Arab descent who is also a practicing Muslim.

“The road to dialogue is two ways: we need to understand one another, and others need to understand the United States in this ever-increasing globalized world,” said Dauod, echoing earlier statements by Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes. “There may be differences, but in fact I believe that the world can and is coming closer together,” Dauod said.

The webchat attracted a diverse and geographically dispersed audience. Questions were submitted from online participants in the Middle East, Europe, South, Central, and East Asia and Africa. Dauod particularly focused on the concerns and questions from young participants, such as those representing their schools in Tajikistan and Bangladesh.

Responding to a question about the treatment of Muslim women on U.S. college campuses, Dauod drew from her own experiences as a student at Georgetown University. “I will tell you that Washington D.C. is a place of diversity and tolerance for the most part. America is full of such regions: Los Angeles, Dearborn Michigan, New York, etc.”

Another participant asked whether she felt comfortable as a Muslim working in the U.S. State Department. “The work environment here at the State Department is very conducive to all Americans, irrespective of their religious beliefs. I have an equal voice,” Dauod said. She went on to note the service of Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Dina Habib Powell, an American of Egyptian heritage.

“My goal is to work for my government and to build bridges of understanding between Arabs, Muslims, Americans, Europeans, and the rest of the world,” Dauod said.

Upon learning that the United States is home to more than a 1,000 mosques, one participant said, “I’m surprised to learn that there are 1200 mosques in the U.S. I think this is good enough to understand the religious tolerance in the country.” Other participants expressed their eagerness for such online dialogues to continue, a sentiment shared by Dauod who closed the webchat with a pledge to “chat with you all [again] sometime soon.”

A transcript of Dauod’s webchat and information about upcoming webchats are available on the USINFO’s Webchat Station (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats.html>).

For additional information, see Population and Diversity (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity.html) and the State Department publication Muslim Life in America (<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/muslimlife/>).

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